The Southern Essays of Richard M. Weaver. Edited by George M. Curtis III and James J. Thompson, Jr. (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1987. Frontispiece, foreword, preface, acknowledgments, index. Pp. xxii, 268. Paper, $4.50; cloth, $10.00.)

This volume collects fourteen essays written between 1944 and 1963 by Richard M. Weaver, a native North Carolinian. During his lifetime Weaver moved around the South to acquire credentials in the fields of history and literature before earning his reputation as an Agrarian analyst of ideas. In this collection of essays, the editors, having offered a five-page preface and established three subgroups, stay out of Weaver's way, reappearing only with a detailed, analytic index.

Weaver was a graceful, even elegant stylist without eccentricities. Projecting a quietly cheerful tone that did not need wittiness to please the reader, he confronted serious, urgent matters but stayed calm, except at one point. Authoritatively, he moved between the present and the sweep of history, between the region and the world. He expressed himself so cogently that any reviewer who tries to paraphrase him will seem reductionist.

The editors judge that Weaver was "that odd creature in the twentieth century: a resolutely hopeful traditionalist." He did insist that "there is no identity without historicity." As for hopefulness, he sounded shrill just once—when he compared mandated desegregation to the (supposed) horrors of Reconstruction under Federal rule. Overall, Weaver kept circling back to those threadbare yet important questions: Is there a distinctly southern cast of mind and spirit, and will it endure? Though he could not have foreseen all the accelerating forces of homogenization, he would probably still hold that the southern character will not only endure but may prevail. The editors give the climactic position in the book to the essay "The South and the American Union" (1957), which itself climaxes

with the conclusion that possibly the "unyielding Southerner will emerge as a providential instrument for the saving of this nation."

The publisher may believe so too. This handsomely produced book is priced well below the for-profit scale.

Louis J. Budd

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The Southern Vision of Andrew Lytle. By Mark Lucas. (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1987. Pp. xiv, 158. Notes, selected bibliography, and index. $22.50.)

The Southern Essays of Richard M. Weaver. Edited by George M. Curtis, III and James J. Thompson, Jr. (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1987. Pp. xxii, 268. Index. $10.00 cloth, $4.50, paper.)

Mark Lucas, who teaches English at Centre College, carefully traces the development of the thought of distinguished novelist and teacher Andrew Lytle. After completing Vanderbilt in the 1920s, the young Tennessean made the characteristic pilgrimage beyond the South (in this instance to the Yale drama school). Like some others who were to contribute to *I'll Take My Stand*, he came to prefer his native region to the sophisticated world to which he had escaped. This change of mind is illustrated in his biography of Nathan Bedford Forrest and in his essay for *I'll Take My Stand*, both of which defend the yeoman farmer from threats from the North. In the 1930s, Lytle began to see the small farm as the counterpart of the organic society of the Middle Ages, thus broadening his vision of his native region. In his famous story "Jericho, Jericho, Jericho," and in his first novel *The Long Night* (1936), he abandoned his polemical defense of the yeoman South. Indeed, he pictured traditional society as threatened, not only by industrialism but by the inevitable human guilt of its defenders.

His most celebrated novel, *The Velvet Horn* (1957), concerns both the physical and spiritual incest of a decadent southern family turned upon itself. Once again rendering a detailed picture of southern society, Lytle, having read Jungian psychology, saw his characters as archetypes, figures that recur forever in human civilization. *A Wake for the Living* (1975) a collection of family anecdotes that reveals the source of some of his fiction, provides a dramatic contrast to Lytle's earlier defenses of the South. It is, instead, a somber tribute to the living southern past, and a vision into humanity itself, flawed as it is.

An appropriate companion to the work on Lytle is a volume of essays by Richard M. Weaver, who studied English at Vanderbilt in the 1930s, received his Ph.D. at Louisiana State University, then taught English at the University of Chicago until his untimely death in 1963. While Lytle deepened his southern vision from the perspective of his life in this region, primarily at Florida State University and at the University of the South at Sewanee, Weaver, at the University of Chicago, persistently juxtaposed the northern and southern viewpoints. For example, he preferred John Randolph of Roanoke to Henry David Thoreau, who lost his sense of community in his devotion to abstract concepts. Concerning the antagonists in the Webster-Hayne debate, Weaver chose the position of the South Carolinian to the all-encompassing nationalism of Daniel Webster.

In "Aspects of the Southern Philosophy," Weaver described southern religion in terms that Lytle continues to expound. The University of Chicago professor wrote that despite the diversity of their religion, southerners, from Episcopalians to backwoods converts, accept the primacy of nature ruled by a powerful, mystical deity. As for the editors of his volume of essays, George M. Curtis, III is

professor at Hanover College in Indiana, while James J. Thompson, Jr. is editor of *The New Oxford Review* and is the author of three books, including *Tried as by Fire: Southern Baptists and the Religious Controversies of the 1920s.*

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ESSAY-REVIEW

RICHARD H. KING

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Anti-Modernists All!

The Reactionary Imperative: Essays Literary and Political, by M. E. Bradford. Peru, Illinois: Sherwood Sugden & Company, 1990. v + 227 pp.; *Ideas Have Consequences*, by Richard M. Weaver. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984. 187 pp. $7.97 (paper); *The Southern Essays of Richard M. Weaver*, edited by George M. Curtis, III, and James J. Thompson, Jr. Indianapolis, Indiana: Liberty Press, 1987. xix + 256 pp. + index. $4.50 (paper); *The Southern Tradition at Bay: A History of Postbellum Thought*, by Richard M. Weaver, edited by George Core and M. E. Bradford. Washington, D. C.: Regnery Gateway, 1989. 393 pp. + index. $11.95 (paper).

ONE OF THE STRANGEST DEVELOPMENTS IN recent intellectual life is the emerging consensus that modernity has been a disaster. Where conservatives once occupied the anti-modernist redoubt by themselves, now those who identify themselves with the various "post" positions, e. g. poststructuralism or postmodernism, along with communitarian social and political theorists on the Left and Right, inveigh against the Enlightenment "project" as part of the problem rather than the solution. Reason has become rationalization of the world or deracinating abstraction, the enabler of extermination camps and Gulags; individual autonomy has revealed itself as possessive individualism or narcissism; and progress through science and technology has come to seem an obstacle rather than a key to our survival.

Of course there are major divisions amongst the anti-modernists. Though communitarians want to replace a discourse of rights with a discourse of the common good, communitarians on the Right emphasize the importance of virtuous leadership to help guide the citizen body to virtue, while democratic communitarians see participation in the *res publica* as the key to restoring citizen commitment to the public interest. Poststructuralists are a far from homogenous lot either. Some critics on the Left suggest that poststructuralists are the secret sharers of Reaganism, that they talk Left but live Right; while neo-Conservatives prefer to link recent literary theo-

retical trends with affirmative action and an attack on literary canons and intellectual standards. (Liberal education has suddenly become, it seems, a great conservative cause.) Finally, traditional conservatives locate what Jürgen Habermas calls the "other of reason" in a renewed transcendental faith, and/or in a revitalization (somehow) of Weaver's "classical-Christian-medieval synthesis" (*Southern Essays*, p. 234) that the Enlightenment itself dissolved.

Not unreasonably, (white) Southern intellectual conservatives can take some pride in this growing tide of anti-modernist sentiment: they were there first.[1] Whether one begins with what Louis Hartz names the "reactionary Enlightenment" of the antebellum period or with the publication of *I'll Take My Stand* in 1930, American conservatism, when one discounts nineteenth-century liberalism, aka libertarian conservatism and anti-Communist conservatism, has been largely Southern and/or European in provenance. It is fitting, then, that several works of the most influential Southern conservative since the Agrarians, Richard Weaver (1910-1963), have been re-issued in paper and that M. E. Bradford, like Weaver once a student at Vanderbilt, but a figure more concerned with literature and with contemporary politics, has recently published a book of pieces done in the 1970s and 1980s.

It is tempting to see all Southern conservatives as basically alike. But this is far from the truth. Indeed, Bradford suggests two disparate strands in Southern political culture that help explain the differences, at least in emphasis, among the region's conservatives.

> The English Whig tradition of earned Saxon rights and its preoccupation with individual self-realization through liberty and law provided a language for dealing with George III, Federalist mercantilism and subsequent "colonialist" incursions. But the South has also made its Tory noises: in defense of "peculiar" institutions—spiritual, moral, social and economic. (*The Reactionary Imperative*, p. 180)

Put another way, Southern conservatives tend toward either a localized republican (not liberal) tradition or a quasi-aristocratic and feudal one. No Southern conservative, emphasizes Bradford, is all one or the other. But such a typology helps illuminate the differences,

[1]In this paper I assume that Southern conservatives are white. Any Southern conservatism that makes historical tradition and precedent central to its vision would have to be racially exclusive, unless a black conservative were willing to honor a past marked by racial slavery and white supremacy. More generally, Afro-American conservatives will be libertarian conservatives.

however slight they may appear, between Bradford, who asserts early on that he is "a Whig and republican and argue[s] in the attempt to recover the tradition of civic humanism . . . ." (*RI*, preface) and Weaver, who locates the sources of the Southern mind in the "feudal theory of society," the "code of chivalry," the "ancient concept of the gentleman," and a sense of "religiousness" and "the inscrutable" (*Southern Tradition*, pp. 31-32). Alongside Bradford one might place Donald Davidson, Frank Owsley and perhaps John Shelton Reed, while Allen Tate and Marion Montgomery belong with Weaver among Tory or traditional conservatives.

Still what unites Southern conservatives generally is a hostility to modernity. What do they mean by modernity? The short answer is: everything bad. For Weaver the rot set in with the "defeat of logical realism" by nominalism in the fourteenth century: "without the metaphysical dream it is impossible to think of men living together harmoniously over an extent of time" (*Ideas Have Consequences*, pp. 3, 18). From that point on Western history has been a rolling thunder of "abdications" leading to empiricism, rationalism, positivism, relativism, liberalism, egalitarianism, statism, pragmatism, utilitarianism and so on. *The Southern Tradition at Bay* was Weaver's attempt to explain and defend the "mind of a religious agrarian order in struggle against the forces of modernism" (*ST*, p. 28). This was important not just as a gesture of regional piety but also because the South, to Weaver's mind, had been "one of the few effective challenges to a monolithic culture of unredeemed materialism" (*SE*, p. 6).

Within the American setting, Bradford answers the question "Is the American Experience Conservative?" with a not unexpected affirmative, at least up until 1819. He creatively misreads Jefferson's *Declaration* as a rooted objection to "submission to tyranny," not an abstract defense of natural rights. It was a document that bore on the independence of communities from external control, not negative liberty of citizens within them. Overall, the *Declaration* was meant to preserve not destroy a way of life (*RI*, pp. 122-124). For Weaver the Civil War and Reconstruction were to the American experience what the French Revolution had been to Europe. Then, as in Revolutionary France, there was the onset of "political centralization," "the ending of fixed social relationships," and "the substitution of pecuniary standards of conduct for the old code of chivalry and *noblesse oblige*" (*ST*, p. 97). After that, the deluge: the

collapse of inner and outer forms and convention and the elevation of sensation, selfishness and impulsiveness to high principle.

Within this assumption of historical declension, several aspects of Southern conservatism are particularly important. Both Weaver and Bradford reject the importance given to ideas, theories and visions not grounded in concrete experience or built on transcendental foundations. This latter caveat is important, since Weaver, if anyone, was enamoured of the power of the Idea: "our most basic ideas of human destiny . . . have a great, though not unobstructed, power to determine our course" (*IC*, p. 3). In several of his essays, Weaver argues that the South was not devoted to first principles just as Bradford argues that the essential loyalty of Southerners was to a *societas*, not "propositional truth" (*RI*, p. 122). Rather, claimed Weaver, the South was committed to its historical experience as a separate society and the precedents and traditions comprising its culture. Defending the South was a "rhetorical," not a "dialectical" task: to do so meant working with the concretely given rather than from the logical entailment of first principles. We can also see this commitment to actually existing society in Bradford's rejection of the view that Faulkner and Frost were modernists alienated from their societies. He claims that before *The Unvanquished*, "modernity was more often the subject of [Faulkner's] work than its doctrine" (*RI*, p. 8). To think otherwise is to accept the modernist assumption that all artists should be alienated from rather than speak for and preserve the traditions of their communities. This also implies that the New Critical tenet that literature and politics can or should be neatly separated should itself be rejected: "the war we are in is a struggle which will not be won easily and . . . literature is part of the struggle, whatever the purists wish it to be" (*RI*, p. 31).

From one perspective, to reject the primacy that Weaver and Bradford give to the social is just to reject their conservatism as a whole. Still, there are a couple of caveats that might be entered. First, the distinction both men want to make between propositional truth and experiential precedent is untenable, at least within the horizon of American history. The "proposition" to which Lincoln claimed the North was dedicated became over time an experiential precedent insofar as it was implemented. Analogously, the nature of Southern society as hierarchical, patriarchal and local to the extent that it was conceptualized by thinkers such as Weaver into a "Southern philosophy" became an abstraction from which other

positions could be logically deduced. Tate already recognized the paradox of intellectual conservatism in his contribution to *I'll Take My Stand*—as did Weaver indirectly when in 1950 he wrote of the alienating effects of reflection about the agrarian cause: "The Agrarian intellectualized himself enough to make a case for agrarian living. In doing so, he was ceasing to be native" (*SE*, p. 40).

Second, Bradford's conception of Faulkner as "bard or *scop*" is not wrong so much as it is one-sided. One might rephrase Bradford's point by saying that Anglo-American modernism, of which Faulkner was a distinguished representative, called into question the modern dispensation by means paradoxically of modernist techniques. Even then, no one can read any Faulkner biography and miss his sense of alienation from his own community in Oxford and also increasingly from the South. Nor can we ignore the satirical and parodic dimensions of Faulkner's vision of the Southern tradition and the agonized critique of the region he offered in, say, *Absalom, Absalom!* Bradford's reminder that not all artists, even modern ones, need be alienated is an important one. But it is not the whole story about modern artists in general or about Faulkner in particular.

Another way of approaching the problem of the primacy of *societas* is to focus on Weaver's and Bradford's distrust of the "political," both in the form of an hostility to state centralization and an indifference to political participation by people, whatever their race. Both Weaver and Bradford use "republican" to refer to a style of life of an individual, e. g. John Taylor of Caroline's "republican simplicity" (*SE*, p. 17); to a characteristic of the South as, for instance, "patriarchal and republican" (*RI*, p. 122); or to the alleged commitment to the common good by white Southern leaders. The problem is that this represses what is essential to republicanism—citizen participation and the primacy of the political.

Of course Southern conservative hostility to the State derives less from a perception of its totalitarian potential than from the suspicion that racial change, whether one refers to the abolition of slavery, the War and Reconstruction or the Second Reconstruction, requires application of federal power to promote equality. There is no denying Weaver's commitment to white supremacy and Bradford's relatively few comments on race indicate that he has accepted the post-1960s dispensation rather grudgingly. Still, as Bradford notes, Southern conservatism has been liberated from the racial

incubus as such and is "less preoccupied with problems of race than at any time since 1820" (*RI*, p. 130).

But what this analysis of the loss of the political in Southern conservatism suggests is that when Southern conservatives are true to their social and cultural vision, they land in a political dead-end. Their political theory—or lack of one—allows them no way to preserve the local or regional society they treasure or to bring it back into line with their traditions. Considerations of race aside, neither man is an egalitarian or believer in individual rights as such. Yet historically Bradford's belief that no one should be above the law (*RI*, p. 141) was a dead letter in many parts of the South before the Civil Rights revolution. He simply has no way within his vision of society or politics to correct such an injustice.

Similarly, one of Weaver's most appealing ideas is the emphasis he places upon the importance of "piety" toward nature and a respect for the "personality" of others. And in an aside left undeveloped, Bradford suggests that Southern conservatism is "not much akin to the conservatism of 'throne and altar,' the conservatism of the market economists, or even the conservatism of judicial restraint" (*RI*, p. 127). Thus Southern *societas* conservatism might have offered effective resistance to Reaganite market conservatism. Both men fear the unrestrained workings of the market economy, the gimcrack nature of the consumer culture and the onset of mass society dominated by the mass media. Yet they have no way from within their own theoretical position to oppose the market and its corrosive effects, since they will allow the State no role in restraining the market and they are indifferent to grass-roots political action. Theoretically this helps explain why there has been no conservative green/environmentalist movement in the South: Southern conservatives will the ends but not the means. In practical terms, this analysis suggests why Southern conservatives are just as opportunistic as those they scorn as infected with the virus of relativism.

Finally, recent attacks on the anti-humanist and anti-rational orientation of poststructuralism, given impetus by the exposure of Paul de Man's early pro-German and obliquely anti-Semitic writings and the widespread dissemination of information concerning Martin Heidegger's wretched support of the Nazis in 1934 and his failure even to disavow this temporary support, have again raised the question of the links between anti-modernism in general and fascist political

culture in particular. More pointedly, the question must be asked about anti-modernism of the Southern variety—was it in any way fascist or proto-fascist?

Charges of this nature were not of course unheard of in the 1930s and 1940s. Prominent modernist writers such as Eliot, Pound and Yeats flirted verbally or committed explicitly to (proto-)fascist ideas and movements. Several Agrarians contributed to *American Review* in the 1930s and its publisher, Seward Collins, had some association with fascists. Indeed, W. J. Cash felt compelled to explicitly distance himself from such charges against the Agrarians before he criticized them in his *The Mind of the South*. And yet Weaver himself was much more frank about the issue than defenders—or critics—of the South and Southern conservatives were then or have been since. Evidently Weaver considered it an important issue and discussed it as such.

Weaver first broached the subject in "The South and the Revolution of Nihilism" (1944). There he explored what seemed to be contradiction between the South's strong anti-fascist and particularly anti-Nazi position and its value commitments that seemed, on his own admission, to echo Nazi ideology.

> . . . in open debate the South would have been hard put to it to distinguish between some of the slogans of the New Order and the tenets of its own faith . . . . Southern whites considered themselves *Herrenvolk* in relation to the Negro . . . belief in the influence of blood and soil is powerful with them . . . glorification of the martial spirit, the distrust of urban liberalism, the hatred of money economy are pages that might be found in the book of any unreconstructed Southerner. (*SE*, p. 183)

Weaver resolved the contradiction with the dubious argument that Southern conservatism was essentially pre-modern, while fascism was essentially a reaction from within the modernist ethos to the decadence of modern life. Thus Southern conservatism recognized that fascism's anti-modernism was "the kind of usurpation toward which radical democracy always tends" (*SE*, p. 187). The best antidote to fascism was more—not less—conservatism.

Yet in the Introduction and Epilogue to *The Southern Tradition at Bay*, written presumably in the early 1960s to supplement the manuscript that was essentially the doctoral dissertation of 1943, Weaver returned again, almost defiantly, to the issue.[2] He noted

[2]Here editors Core and Bradford fail us. Their preface is short and perfunctory; in particular they offer no help with the history of the manuscript of *The Southern Tradition at Bay*, a book that was twenty-five years coming to publication.

early in the book that "[The South] has always been on the side of blood and soil, of instinct, of vitalism" (*ST*, p. 26). Near the end he returns once again to an explicit linkage:

> It is undeniable that there are numerous resemblances between the Southern agrarian mind and the mind of modern fascism . . . fascism too in its ultimate character is a protest against materialist theories of history and society.

Weaver went on also to link the Southern mind with fascism through its desire for "holiness and heroism" as against the "bleakness of socialist bureaucracy":

> [Fascism] attracted by its call to achievement, by its poetry, by its offer of a dramatic life. It attracted even by its call to men to be hard on themselves. (*ST*, pp. 379-380)

Clearly, Weaver's Southern philosophy was congenial with certain aspects of fascism. What Weaver shared with fascism was what Walter Benjamin referred to as the desire to "aestheticize" and to spiritualize politics. Thus Weaver's objection to politics was also based on its lack of a spiritual dimension and the draining away of all heroism from public life. The only politics worth pursuing was a holy and heroic one, which is to say war as "the pursuit of politics by other means." The kind of trap this led him into can be seen in one passage from *The Southern Tradition at Bay*, presumably part of the original manuscript. There Weaver went over the top with the following claim:

> Although this organization [the KKK] has since covered itself with odium by becoming the tool of bigotry, it may properly be thought of as the last expression of Southern political genius. (*ST*, p. 97)

He later toned down this position in "The South and the American Union" (1957):

> Some of the means, for example, the Ku Klux Klan, were irregular, but essentially it was the political genius of Jefferson, of Washington, of Madison, and of Pinckney expressing itself in times of trouble and oppression. (*SE*, p. 249)[5]

What kept Southern conservatism from becoming fascist? Ironically, given my earlier criticisms, because Southern conservatism had no positive role for the State as the expression of the *Volk*, however defined, the politics of heroism, holiness and hardness

[5]If there were an "of" after "example" in this passage, the referent of "it" would be the KKK. As it stands, the referent of "it" seems to be the white South during Reconstruction generally. Altogether this is a strange passage.

found no powerful and suitable instrument for its purposes. Second, racism became less rather than more crucial to Southern identity as the century progressed. Where it spread like a virus through Europe in the 1930s, Southern racism had begun to lose some of its political and even social respectability, even before 1945. The great puzzle about Southern anti-modernism was that for all its anti-rational, anti-urban and anti-cosmopolitan leanings, in sum for all its anti-modern traits, it never made "intellectuals," the "city" and the "foreigner" code words for Jews. Perhaps the dominance of color-driven racism minimized the importance of anti-Semitism or nativism in the South, relatively speaking. Perhaps the strong bibliolatry of Southern Protestantism helped keep the South from succumbing to anti-Semitism and a not totally ineffectual strand of middle-class progressivism denied Southern conservatism a strong economic and financial base for a reactionary political movement.

Indeed, most white Southerners remained, like most Americans, "moderns," tainted with individualism and the idea of equality, even as they rejected the latter idea in the area of race. This is not to deny that white Southerners could form lynch mobs but the history of the Klan illustrates an incapacity for ideological coherence, in comparison with, say, the SS in Germany. Indeed, the Southern suspicion of intellect, on which Weaver and Cash were in agreement, meant that no comprehensive ideology of fascism was ever worked out, much less disseminated. Even Southern conservatives of the most ideological inclinations knew, I think, that that was a lost cause.

***The Southern Essays Of Richard M. Weaver*, George M. Curtis III and James J. Thomson Jr. editors (268 pages, Liberty Press, $6.95 in paper covers)**

This will be the last of five posthumous volumes reaching us from Richard Weaver, the man whose 1948 *Ideas Have Consequences* contributed so heavily to the present conservative rebirth. The 14 essays reprinted here (from various journals) span Weaver's career from 1943 to 1963, the year of his untimely death. The topics include the Nashville Agrarians; Southern chivalry and total war; the South and the American Union; the famous Robert Hayne and Daniel Webster 1830 speeches of the older religiousness of the South; and, General Lee as philosopher.

How resolutely Southern and conservative these pieces are, as we expect from the North Carolinian who penned that strong volume called *The Southern Tradition At Bay*. Yet how richly American. And indeed how universal, reminding us of Stark Young's notation that he (Young) defended certain principles not because they belong to the South but because the South belongs to the principles. And how they typify Weaver's penetrating zest when smiting modernism.

He never equivocated, not the man who wrote in 1959 (from his post in the liberal-dominated University of Chicago): "There are many things compelling us to believe that Liberalism is the death-wish of modern civilization. In its incapacity for commitment, its nihilistic approach, and its almost pathological fear of settled principle, Liberalism operates to destroy everything and conserve nothing."

This handsome volume is sure to take its place among Weaver's other classics. —JAMES B. GRAVES ■■

The Southern Essays of Richard M. Weaver. Edited by George M. Curtis III and James J. Thompson, Jr. Indianapolis, Indiana: Liberty Press, 1987. 268 pp. $10.00, cloth; $4.50, paper.

The Aeneid. Translated by C. H. Sisson. Manchester: Carcanet, 1986. 358 pp. £16.95.

John Randolph of Roanoke and Henry David Thoreau exemplify, for Richard Weaver, two ways of viewing the world. Randolph, a statesman, followed the way of the artist and aristocrat, intuition, an approach which "springs from those aristocratic qualities of self-confidence and simplicity." Thoreau followed a way scorned by Randolph, logic and dialectic, a way which led Thoreau to "simple withdrawal." Thoreau, an eccentric, found simplicity in isolation; Randolph, an eccentric, found it in society.

From ancient times until nearly the opening of our century, simplicity has stood as a chief mark of a gentleman. The etymology of the word makes clear the reason for this. Simplicity is the folding of experience into a unity. This unity is apparent in manners, for manners reflect the moral aspects of being. The Greek word *ēthos* expresses this unity. It means both manners and moral character, just as the English word *manner* did until the latter part of the eighteenth century when moral character slipped from the word. English biblical translators once had an exact match for translating *ēthē* in St. Paul's quotation from Menander, "Evil communications corrupt good manners." Cicero in his simple, yet profound, account of a good society, *De officiis*, gives detailed instructions in manners, because *quod decet honestum est et quod honestum est decet*, good custom rests on good morals.

Since Richard Weaver takes for granted this unity in classical and Christian thought, he joins without explanation aristocratic qualities and simplicity. By this unity he illuminates Thoreau's simple withdrawal from society. Thoreau, writes Weaver, rejected "Ciceronian humanism and the later developments of Catholic Christianity." Randolph followed the old way.

By the poles of intuition and dialectic—but not, let it be said, with mindless chatter about an idea that was in the air—Weaver plumbs the minds of many Southern thinkers. There are Senator Hayne, not bettered after all by Senator Webster; R. L. Dabney, who in the Gilded Age "pronounced pragmatism the equivalent of atheism"; Alfred Taylor Bledsoe, a "brilliant spokesman of the old regime"; and "Lee the Philosopher." There are brilliant minds from our own day, the Tennessee Agrarians and William Faulkner. These thinkers shared a belief that "religion is the expression of man's poetic, tragic, and metaphysical intuitions of life." Classical men, they believed that man lives in a creation that is "finite, balanced, and proportional."

Weaver, himself a classical man, follows the sensible view of time embedded in the Greek adverb *opisō*. With place this adverb describes what is backwards

and behind. With time the adverb describes the hereafter, because the future is unseen. What lies before us is that which we can see, the past. Weaver, surveying the past with his quick eye, reaches through the tangled experiences of human life to moral foundations. For Weaver men, not money, shape culture and history.

Like Weaver, Virgil searches out the meaning of history in men, not money and property. The word *pecunia* is not in the *Aeneid*, indeed not in any of Virgil's poems. The theme of the *Aeneid* has its ground in arms, men, and gods. In a magic line, which echoes the opening line of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas calls his little band of defeated Trojans to break out of Troy, afire, ruined.

Arma viri ferte arma. Vocat lux ultima victos.

These men, defeated, facing their last light, rouse themselves, sail on to found Rome. Thus, they conquer the world. In his vibrant translation of this line, C. H. Sisson catches the echo of the opening line.

> To arms, men, to arms! The last light calls
> Those who have been defeated.

Functional words and a plodding rhythm catch, in the second line, the weariness of defeat. They lead to the burst of energy in "defeated," a weariness and energy which Virgil gains by spondees and chiasmus, *vocat lux ultima victos*. Subtlety of rhythm, diction, and arrangement of words in this English translation of the *Aeneid* transport a reader into the intense excitement of Virgil's poem.

Fathers and sons pervade the action of the *Aeneid*, Anchises and Aeneas, Priam and Hector, Aeneas and Ascanius, Evander and Pallas, Mezentius and Lausus, Daunus and Turnus. This bond illuminates men surprised by a revelation of their destinies. In the final episode of the *Aeneid*, Turnus, defeated, begs for his life, or at least his body. He begs Aeneas, in the name of Anchises, to pity Daunus's old age. The power of this plea softens Aeneas's purpose. His eyes roll. But arms steel Aeneas to his duty. His own armor, in contrast to his softening will, feeds his fierceness. Glancing at Pallas's sword-belt on Turnus's shoulder, Aeneas remembers Pallas's father, Evander.

> With that, white hot,
> He buried his sword full in the breast before him.
> Turnus's limbs grew slack and with a groan
> A life not fit to live fled to the shades.

These lines are strict, yet supple. In the phrase "With that, white hot," the dentals and final spondee catch the passion which steels Aeneas to his duty. These formal English verses reflect the control of spirit which Aeneas has gained through the glance at Pallas's sword-belt. Alliteration binds the words: *buried* and *breast*, *sword*, *slack*, and *shades*, *limbs*, *life*, *live*, and *full*, *fit*, and *fled*. In the first three feet of the last line, the regularity of iambs prepares for the slight, but powerful, variation of rhythm in the final phrase, bound by a chiasmus, "fled to the shades." The rhythm of this phrase echoes the rhythm of a climactic moment. Aeneas's sword pierces Turnus "full in the breast." Thus action and poem close with a haunting rhythm.

Because he is brave and great-spirited, Mezentius has seized a place in men's memories. He is a brave warrior, li cliff, "Exposed to the sweep of the sea," a boar, which "from a safe distance , Everyone attacks," a lion, "Driven mad by hunger," Orion, "Making a path for himself." Like Orion he is a lonely exile, a hard man, scornful of the gods, hated by his own people. The foundations of his being are self-confidence and love for his son. Lausus, in turn, loves his father. Seeing his father wounded, Lausus seeks his revenge. He fights the great Aeneas.

Having killed Lausus, Anchisiades—not the great Aeneas, but the son of Anchises—groans and calls out, *miserande puer.* Mezentius, learning of his son's death, returns to fight Aeneas, who kills him. Mezentius breathes his last request:

et me consortem nati concede sepulchro.

Consortem is a common *sors*, "fate or exit." *Consors* may in poetry designate a brother or sister. Behind *nati* is the coming into existence of the whole creation. Behind *sepulchro* is *sepelio*, "to ruin or destroy." In ruin, father and son sharing a common fate become brothers. Every foot, save the fifth, is a spondee. The dactyl punctuates the sobriety of grief with a quick joy. Falling on the imperative *concede* and the first syllable of *sepulchro*, the dactyl drives home a victory of self-confidence over the tomb. The words and rhythms in the translation of this line are rich.

And let me share a tomb with my son.

The Anglo-Saxon *share* carries the double sense of "to shear" and "to receive as one's portion," hence, "to occupy together." *Tomb* carries the weight of its Greek source, which associates the grave with decrepitude. In this English line four ponderous iambs lead to a giddy anapaest, a brief moment of joy. The line is one foot short. Joy illuminates that pause.

This is Mezentius, the man. The man's arms stand in the final line of the episode, *in arma cruore*, the blood from this great spirit a sign of his failure, an emblem of his memorable life. He has scorned the gods. His vow to offer Aeneas as a trophy to his son, dead, is rich with scorn. An atheist, he makes the vow to his son, not, as he ought, to a god. His god, he says, is his right hand and a javelin, *dextra mihi deus et telum.* Yet the gods are omnipresent. Virgil reminds us that Jove has warned Mezentius, that Mars deals war with an equal hand, that Venus and Juno look on the combat, that all the gods as they have watched "pitied both / The empty anger and weight of suffering / Men must endure." Brilliant lines in this translation describe Mezentius's discovery, by way of his dead son, that he is an exile from men and gods.

Alas, now indeed
I know the bitterness of exile
And now at last my wound is deep indeed.

This knowledge has come on a sudden.

heu nunc misero mihi demum
exilium infelix! nunc alte vulnus adactum.

The first *nunc*, joined to *demum*, "now at length," lays open the suddenness of the revelation. The second *nunc* hangs to Mezentius's wound, now growing into a spiritual wound. *Alte* carries in this context its etymological sense, *alo*, "to make to grow." The English translation gets this sudden revelation and the power of *alte* by the end words of these three verses, "now indeed," "exile," and "deep indeed." The last verse is regular, five iambs, which catch the formality of a spirit resigned to destiny, "And now at last my wound is deep indeed."

In verse after verse, episode after episode, book after book, this English translation sustains its vigor. Like Virgil, C. H. Sisson regulates thought and feeling through subtle phrasal units and verses which keep the story fresh. Read aloud, this English version will charm a reader into the souls of heroes, living though their bodies have lain for ages in tombs.

In C. H. Sisson's translation a reader consorts with heroes. In Richard Weaver's essays a reader contemplates the ever fresh springs of heroic minds.

Auburn University *Ward Allen*

briefly reviewed

The Southern Essays of Richard M. Weaver. Edited by George M. Curtis III and James J. Thompson Jr. *Liberty Press. 268 pages. $4.50.*

It struck me a couple of years ago that all the contemporary caterwauling about freedom and rights is actually a cry for place and power. It is pathetic to see a society, ritualistically panting after what is new and free of all controls, in reality betray a stultifying and standardizing insecurity. The way petty bureaucrats treat the public with deliberate discourtesy; the way people in offices and behind counters enslave themselves to forms and arbitrary procedures, and make damn sure their patrons do likewise – what are these pathologies but tepid ways for people to carve out a modicum of mastery in their impotent lives? What we have in urbanized America, beneath the glitter of a thousand technological toys, is the popular fascism of a rootless people.

Why so grim an introduction to a book of essays on the American South? I had not known of Richard Weaver before, much to my misfortune. The insights I had begun to develop are here laid out with extraordinary profundity and precise, vivid prose. A recurring theme in these essays is what real freedom is all about. Liberty does not thrive in opposition to the commonweal, but within it, in the widest possible sovereignty and property, in local control of local concerns, and in tolerance of differing customs. It does not thrive in mass dependence on a distant Federal government ordering affairs with bits of official paper.

In the essay titled "Two Orators," Weaver recounts the Webster-Hayne debate of 1830 (the issue is national consolidation and "progress" versus regional particularism):

"For Hayne [the Senator from South Carolina] the implication was clear that liberty required the independence and dignity of the parts, with local attention to and dispensation of local affairs. . . . Freedom is something that gathers around the hearth, inheres in local associations, and endears a man to his place of habitation. It was a protection to enable him to enjoy things, not a force or power to enable him to do things. . . . Now a new notion was beginning to be broached. It was that happiness lies in magnitude and potentiality."

"Magnitude and potentiality" have by now won the day, and are we therefore a happy people? Later in the essay Weaver says:

"By the very nature of things, freedom depends upon an establishment of law and custom. To be free a man has to know where things are to be found and in what form, for these are the very instrumentalities of his choice. An order which derives its impetus from a dynamism and which moves along on a collective urge cannot present the alternative choices which a conservative order holds out." Weaver's conservatism has nothing to do with the shrill inanities of Right or Left. It is a brief for custom and ceremony and stability, and a cry against King Flux.

It is unfortunate that Weaver is so little known outside the South. The man is a genuine philosopher. The essays in this volume – on the political order, the culture of the South, poetry, religion – are marriages of beauty and wisdom that put to shame even the most exalted punditries emanating from *The New York Review of Books* or *National Review*.

What is it about the South that could produce a man of such percipience? Paradoxically, perhaps, the clearest thought is sustained and nurtured by a culture that cannot be pinioned on the map of reason. Here's how Weaver puts it:

"As I cross the Ohio River on my way to the South, I have a feeling that I am entering a region where things are somehow known mysteriously. They are not known through the flat, open, external means which positivistic science has told us to trust exclusively, but through other means which carry many nuances beyond the power of the first to transmit. It is the feeling that my presence and my place are somehow duly registered, but not in a way that I could ever learn directly. . . . Still, there is a final adjustment, so that one begins to sense the operation somewhere of supernal wisdom and supernal grace."

You cannot be known, or know yourself, unless your presence and your place are duly registered: this is what Weaver and the South have to teach us, if we will but listen.

THOMAS W. CASE

THE SOUTHERN ESSAYS OF RICHARD M. WEAVER. Edited by George M. Curtis, III and James J. Thompson, Jr. Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1987. pp. xxii + 268; $10.00; paper $4.50.

After Richard Weaver's death in 1964, his brother-in-law and literary executor, Kendall Beaton, presciently foresaw the eventual publication of a collection of Weaver's essays on Southern culture. Three other collections of Weaver's work and his dissertation were published first. Now, with this book of Southern essays, the possibilities for anthologies of his work upon unitary themes seems to have been exhausted.

It is no doubt a testament to the durability of Weaver's ideas that in addition to the appearance of this new collection, two of his most important works have been recently republished, *Visions of Order* and

The Ethics of Rhetoric. In a sense, however, it would be exceedingly ironic if his thinking had proven to be merely fashionable. Weaver admired arguments he thought apprehended the essence of a thing, and his devotees will undoubtedly discover this quality of timelessness in his own writing. He looked to history and philosophy for the lessons he taught; only rarely did he comment specifically on current events, although he persistently indicated the major currents of society which he believed carried it away from the humane traditions of culture and toward materialism, scientism, and communism.

Although this latest collection of essays is not about rhetoric, one essay is an analysis of Webster and Hayne's famous debate and several others incorporate some mention of rhetoric. At the very least this book provides a significant piece of the context within which Weaver's well known views on rhetoric can be better interpreted. He wrote about a variety of things—among them, the Civil War, Southern as against Northern literature, conservatism, war, science, social science, and rhetoric—and his musings on these themes are frequently interwound and interrelated, sometimes in surprising ways. Even in a collection of essays on the South, it is not remarkable to find him talking about rhetoric. Weaver sees rhetoric as a distinctive part of the Southern tradition, as well as a means of cultural preservation and a shield against the onslaught of modernism and scientism.

Without knowing that he was a Southerner who supported Southern causes and culture, it would be easy to miss part of Weaver's motivation for a work like *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, which does not announce his fascination with the Southern experience. Two chapters of this famous work come immediately to mind. One can read "Dialectic and Rhetoric at Dayton, Tennessee" ignorant of the fact that Weaver's interest in the trial might well have been sparked by the Southern Agrarians he met at Vanderbilt. As he points out in one of his Southern essays, the trial and the negative image of the South it engendered gave the Agrarians a powerful motivation to reaffirm Southern culture and values. Similarly, without recognizing his Southern perspective it might not be immediately apparent that his chapter on "The Spaciousness of Old Rhetoric" makes much more sense when read as an exposition of the traditions of Southern, rather than Northern, oratory.

In examining his writing it is always useful to remember that Weaver, a native of a small town in the mountains of western North Carolina, was a man intensely loyal to the traditions of the South, which is not to say that he was uncritical of the South or Southerners. Although he mentions in *The Southern Essays* that there are some things Southerners can learn from the North, it is largely from Southern culture that he derives the essential features of his conservative political philosophy. He spent most of his professional life on the faculty at The University of Chicago, which has since become a lightning rod for intellectual conservatives. But it is doubtful that he ever felt at home there. Just before his death he accepted a temporary position in the English Department at Vanderbilt University, in which the chairman hoped he would remain. By then, Weaver, a protege of the Southern Agrarians under whom he had studied at Vanderbilt, had acquired a considerable reputation as an interpreter and proponent of Southern culture.

In speaking of the Agrarians in "The Southern Phoenix," the first essay of the book, he admits that: "Willingness to accept and defend provincialism as a positive good is practically a test of a Southerner's patriotism" (22). This is a revealing comment, because it suggests an important characteristic of Weaver's rhetoric as well as a trait that distinguishes him from the strictly analytical Northern thinker. He sees as a virtue the acceptance of orthodoxy and as a badge of true distinction the ability to make a compelling statement for it. In reading the essays in this book one is struck by the extent to which they are testaments to Weaver's Southern patriotism. He accepts such important features of the Southern mind as provincialism, religious fundamentalism (though he is neither a provincial nor a fundamentalist), states' rights, and the right of Southern secession, and he defends them with a genius for argument and expression. Weaver revels in the rhetorical *tour de force* that justifies a conservative position that others might see as unjustifiable.

It is not the novelty of his themes but the ingeniousness of his arguments and his imaginative use of the language that make Weaver's writing worthwhile. His rhetoric is invariably epideictic; indeed, it could be argued that epideictic is the genre most suited to his philosophical conservativism. He does not use language as a vehicle for exploring tentative positions; he uses it as a means to make manifest beliefs that are revealed in intuition and sentiment. His own rhetoric is a reflection of what he most values about rhetoric as an art. Praising the Agrarians for their training as poets, he remarks: "It is with the symbol that we make the leap from what can be demonstrated rationally to what cannot, so that the poet as poet is a non-rationalist" (33). There is a sense, strikingly illustrated by Plato, in which the rhetorician is similarly a non-rationalist when he appeals imaginatively to intuitions and deep-seated cultural beliefs. This is the image of rhetoric Weaver discovers in Socrates's celebrated second speech in the *Phaedrus*. It is apparent from Weaver's discussion of John Crowe Ransom's "brilliant exposition of

myth as an expression of essential truth," that the Agrarians at least confirmed what he recognized in the *Phaedrus*—the metaphysical and rhetorical power of myth (36).

There are other resonances of Weaver's analysis of the *Phaedrus*, the lynchpin of his rhetorical philosophy. In the chapter on "Contemporary Southern Literature," he praises Southern fictionalists for presenting humanity as driven by passion as well as reason. "It is," he declares, "an ancient doctrine that man is in this world not just to make his way by dialectical skill, but also to suffer his passion and finally to discover, if he can, the right channel for this passion" (63–64). "Passion," he concludes, "may indeed be a means to virtue" (67–68). Weaver discovers a "vein of high rhetoric" in Southern literature in which the language of the characters and narrators reveal their passions, inclinations, and moral relationships. To exemplify, he quotes the moving soliloquy of a character in Robert Penn Warren's *At Heaven's Gate:* " 'The pore human man, he ain't nuthin but a handful of dust, but the light of God's face on him and he shines like a diamint . . .' " (65). In Faulkner he finds passages "where tumbling streams of image-bearing and evocative words create the speaker's world of value and inclination" (66). Here is not just any rhetoric, here is the humane rhetoric Weaver believes should be cultivated "just because it does enable us to display and direct feeling" (65). This is by no means the only reason he regards rhetoric as important. Rhetoric stands at the opposite pole from what he calls the "language of notation." Rhetoric is of a more traditional world where human feeling and sentiment, the basis of ethics, shaped thought and conduct. The "language of notation" is the product of a competing world view that suppresses cultural uniqueness and individual freedom in the interests of material progress. Rhetoric preserves unique cultures, such as that of the American South; scientism levels them.

One of the essays in this book, "Two Types of American Individualism," the only one that has been previously anthologized, reveals especially well Weaver's position on rhetoric and dialectic. He contrasts the individualism of John Randolph of Roanoke and that of Henry David Thoreau. He maintains that Randolph's political conservatism led him to disdain the dialectical method of his opponents. Pure, hairsplitting dialectic is, according to Weaver, the method of the "eggheads." Just as the rhetorician needs dialectic, lest he lapse into demagoguery, so the dialectician needs rhetoric to prevent arid intellectualism. Rhetoric, he insists, implicates history and thus grounds dialectic in material reality. Weaver's perception of the unity between history and rhetoric is implied in the first two chapters of *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, where he says that rhetoric actualizes the possibilities of dialectic, but the point is not developed until his later writings. In "Two Types of American Individualism" he attributes to Randolph an intuition he says is characteristic of the artist and the aristocrat, while "logic and dialectic are the method of the scientist and democrat" (90). Thus, he concludes, it is the aristocrat or the otherwise intuitive person, in touch with all the nuances of historical reality, who can best find the means of moving his audience.

Weaver further illustrates the linkage between history and rhetoric in his essay on Webster and Hayne. He maintains that Webster's arguments for the sale of the public lands is a dialectic of power, while Hayne's arguments constitute "a rhetoric of history." Weaver judges that Hayne was "reasoning from historical fact and literal interpretation" when he concluded that the federal government ought not to enrich itself by selling the public lands (114). By "historical fact," Weaver means tradition and the status quo, and by "literal interpretation" a reading of the Constitution that makes every act of the federal government ultimately subject to the consent of the states. Webster is portrayed as one who loved the government's "growing power," not "settled right and liberty" (116). Weaver presents Hayne's "rhetoric of history" as a good deal more than simply an appeal to the status quo, which after all included the "peculiar institution"; he gives it an aspect of sacredness by suggesting that Hayne had grounded his arguments on principles revealed in history. Hayne's rhetoric makes its point through "images which have been actualized," and thus manifests a "conservative realism" found lacking in Webster's rhetoric. In Hayne's rhetoric, Weaver discovers tradition fused with principle; in Webster's he sees notions of national aggrandizement and increased power. It is not difficult to understand that in any such debate, let alone one that involved the honor of the South, Weaver would prefer the position of one who stood with the past to one whose rhetoric hinged upon an unrealized depiction of the future. In sum, Weaver's analysis of the debate is a philosophical defense for arguments predicated upon tradition as opposed to those that envision change.

As a rhetorical theorist Weaver is never far from his own sentiments. He is a critic first, a theorist second. He defends a rhetoric that manifests the conservative characteristics he admires so that his theory of rhetoric is, in one sense, a theory of conservative rhetoric. This volume shows Weaver's conservatism and his rhetorical criticism in the context of his devotion to Southern values and culture. Read critically it is a map of the intersecting paths he took as a rhetorical and social critic, a literary

critic, and an apologist for the South and its conservative tendencies in politics, religion, and society. Only part of it is about rhetoric; all of it is revealing of Richard Weaver.

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George M. Curtis, III and James J. Thompson, Jr., Editors.
THE SOUTHERN ESSAYS OF RICHARD M. WEAVER. Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1987. Photograph, index, xxii + 268 pp. $10.00 ($4.50 paper).

This collection of fourteen essays written by Richard M. Weaver between 1944 and 1963 is a welcome addition to southern intellectual history. Editors Curtis and Thompson divide the essays into three groups. The first group, dealing with Southern Literature and Thought, revolves around the Vanderbilt Agrarians. The second group, touching largely on the South's role in American history, includes essays on John Randolph of Roanoke, southern religion, Albert Taylor Bledsoe, southern chivalry, and Robert E. Lee. The third group comes under the heading The Southern Tradition for an American Future and includes Weaver's thoughts on southern philosophy and the southern character. Weaver, who died in 1963, wrote as a political and social conservative. He abhorred modern liberalism, and all that it had bred, especially moral relativism, cultural fragmentation, and non-Christian humanism. His southern essays address these concerns. Like Henry Adams, Weaver sought order and stability. Unlike the New Englander,

he believed that the South and its traditional values offered the last best hope for the survival of western culture. One scholar has gone so far as to call Weaver a "moral historian."

But Weaver spoke to a world a quarter century in the past. How can his insights apply to the 1980s? In truth, they frequently do not. The contradictions and blasphemies of Weaver's America were nothing compared to our own world. Any possible solution to cultural fragmentation in the 1950s would stand but slight chance in the vortex of the 1980s. Curtis and Thompson admit as much. Yet they also believe, and rightly so, that Weaver's observations and arguments frequently serve as bedrock for today's debates between liberals and conservatives, traditionalists and secular humanists. Especially important is Weaver's role in the evolution of southern intellectualism. It was Weaver who refined the agrarianism of the Twelve Southerners to give it a more universal tone. It was Weaver who anticipated C. Vann Woodward's famous characterization of the southern historical "burden" of poverty, defeat, and the tragic sense. Weaver's analyses of these and many other topics are included in the present anthology.

The editors, rather than Weaver, must bear responsibility for the most disappointing aspect of this volume. They justify publication of the essays by lauding Weaver's "learning, clarity, and sagacity." They claim that "few American thinkers of the past half-century can match Weaver's keen perception" (xv). Yet they devote only five introductory pages to Weaver's background, intellectual milieu, and legacy. Fred Hobson's sketch of Weaver in *Tell About the South* (1983) is far more useful and incisive. Weaver is an important figure, and Curtis and Thompson should have told us more about the man and his work. For instance, a few words about Weaver's first published volume, *Ideas Have Consequences* (1948), would have established an analytical framework and allowed readers to appreciate the broader scope of Weaver's thought (and would have been particularly timely in this era of Allan Bloom). Even more glaring is the absence of any discussion of *The Southern Tradition at Bay*, published posthumously in 1968.

Still, Curtis and Thompson have provided a convenient anthology of Weaver's southern essays and, in doing so, have reminded us that even if we disagree with his conclusion, we must still come to grips with Weaver's fertile mind.

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